



NEWS RELEASE

California Department of Social Services

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California Department of Social Services Announces Streamlined Process for Food Stamp Recipients Making it Easier to Stay in the Program

Sacramento – John Wagner, director of the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) today announced the implementation of a new statewide policy that allows for the immediate restoration of food stamp benefits. Previously, if a household's benefits were terminated for failing to comply with a requirement of the program, they were required to start the process over by re-applying. Restoration of benefits will be automatic if the household is able to comply with program requirements within one month of termination of benefits and thereby avoiding the re-application process. The household's benefits for the first month will be pro-rated from the date they comply.

"California continues to take proactive steps to remove barriers and improve services that allow California families better access to healthy, nutritious food," said Wagner. "With this new policy and other policy changes we have implemented recently, CDSS continues to encourage qualified Californians to apply for benefits and to also maintain benefits in a more streamlined, efficient manner."

"This measure helps counties improve customer service for our clients, and ensures eligible families continue to receive the benefits needed to provide food for their families," said Suzanne Nobles, Yuba County Health and Human Services director, who helped in the development of the new policy. "We are always looking for ways to improve the efficiency of the programs we administer, and this policy supports those efforts."

In late 2009, CDSS requested the waiver from the United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) to allow county welfare departments (CWDs) the ability to restore benefits when an easily curable condition, such as failing to submit paperwork, is corrected. The new policy makes it easier for eligible households to maintain their benefits and creates new program administration efficiencies at the county level.

Californians can learn more about applying for food stamps by visiting the CDSS Web site, which links to a federal [pre-screening tool](#) that can be used by most individuals to see if they are eligible for food stamps. Individuals can also download application [forms](#) and complete them in advance of their visit to their county welfare office to apply for food stamps. A list of county welfare offices is available on the CDSS Web site at: www.dss.cahwnet.gov/foodstamps/PG839.htm.

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To qualify for food stamps, an individual's household gross income may not exceed 130 percent of the federal poverty level -- about \$1,984 a month for a family of three. Households with elderly and disabled individuals may have incomes up to 165 percent of the federal poverty level -- about \$2,518 a month for a family of three. Individuals who apply have up to one year to comply with the fingerprint imaging requirements of the program.

The CDSS has been active in pursuing opportunities to increase food stamp access for needy Californians. Specifically, in 2009, the CDSS received approval from the federal government to allow county welfare departments the option of waiving the face-to-face interview for food stamp recipients. Counties are in the process of fully implementing this waiver.

In addition, working with the California Department of Public Health, the CDSS has been working with community organizations in 43 counties to reach underserved communities to help qualified individuals apply for food stamps. Since 2009, funding for this effort has more than doubled, from \$6 million to \$13 million. More detailed information about these efforts can be found at:

<http://www.cdss.ca.gov/cdssweb/entres/pdf/PressRelease/FoodStampProgramOutreachEfforts.pdf>.

Between March 2007 and March 2010, the number of Californians receiving food stamps grew from 2.1 million people to 3.27 million.

For more information on the Food Stamp Program, please visit the CDSS Web site: www.dss.cahwnet.gov/foodstamps/PG847.htm.

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